

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8035

INFO AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT

SUBJECT: CONGRESS OF VETERANS OF OVERSEAS WARS

JOINT OPORTO/ LISBON MESSAGE

1. SUMMARY: LARGE GATHERING OF PORTUGUESE VETERANS OF AFRICAN WARS WILL TAKE PLACE IN OPORTO AT BEGINNING OF JUNE. PERSONALITIES AND THEMES REPRESENT EXTREME RIGHT WING OF PORTUGUESE POLITICS. END SUMMARY

2. MASS MEETING DENOMINATED " FIRST CONGRESS OF VETERANS OF OVERSEAS WARS" IN PORTUGAL' S AFRICAN TERRITORIES SCHEDULED TO CONVENE OPORTO JUNE 1-3. CONGRESS ORGANIZERS STATE MORE THAN 2,000 VETERANS WILL ATTEND CONGRESS, INCLUDING 300 FROM ANGOLA AND 36 FROM MOZAMBIQUE. TRANSPORTATION OF ANGOLA GROUP WILL BE BY CHARTERED 747, COST OF WHICH PROVIDED BY PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION AND REPORTED SUBSIDY FROM ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT.

3. AT PRELIMINARY MEETING IN EARLY APRIL (TWO DAYS
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BEFORE AVEIRO OPPOSITIONIST CONGRESS) ORGANIZERS ANNOUNCED AIMS OF (1) REKINDLING AND STRENGTHENING TIES OF COMRADESHIP CREATED DURING SERVICE TO NATION OVERSEAS, (2) CELEBRATING SERVICES RENDERED TO NATION, PAYING HOMAGE TO MISSION BEING ACCOMPLISHED, AND PLACING IT IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, (3) COMBATTING ALL THAT THREATENS UNITY AND GREATNESS OF PORTUGAL, (4) ESTABLISHING BASIS FOR PERMANENT AND EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY OF OVERSEAS VETERANS IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE THE IDEALS WHICH SERVED THEM DURING COMBAT, AND (5) EXAMINING AND ATTEMPTING TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING OVERSEAS VETERANS ON THEIR RETURN TO CIVILIAN LIFE. RECENT ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM ORGANIZERS STRESS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS, DOWN-PLAYING POLITICAL THEMES, IN FACE OF GENERAL BELIEF INITIALLY THAT REAL PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS TO PROVIDE FORUM FOR RIGHT- WING PROPAGANDA AND IN VIEW OF RUMOR GOP WAS CONSIDERING PROHIBITING CONGRESS.

4. IN RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE SECRETARY OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE STATED THAT THE PRESENCE OF VETERANS IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS " NECESSARY AND URGENT." SAME SPOKESMAN DENIED THAT CONGRESS WAS REACTION TO AVEIRO OPPOSITION CONGRESS, WHICH HE CASTIGATED AS INCITING VIOLENCE AND TREASON, OR REACTION TO RECENT ANP CONGRESS, WHICH HE DISPARAGED AS " THE GOVERNMENT TALKING TO ITSELF." SAME SPOKESMAN EXPRESSED WISH THAT CONGRESS RESULT IN " AN EXPLOSION OF PATRIOTISM, IN VIEW OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AGGRESSION AGAINST OVERSEAS PROVINCES." GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN NO PUBLIC STAND REGARDING CONGRESS, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL COMMENT.

5. ORGANIZERS HAVE BEEN CASTING ABOUT FOR BIG NAME PARTICIPANTS, AND FIRST ANNOUNCED, THEN DENIED, FORMER OVERSEAS MINISTER ADRIANO MOREIRA WOULD ATTEND. (RUMOR MILL SAYS EX- FOREIGN MINISTER FRANCO NOGUEIRA WILL GO.) MOZAMBIQUE C IN C KUALZA DA ARRIAGA HAS SENT EFFUSIVE, WELL PUBLICIZED TELEGRAM TO CONGRESS ORGANIZERS; ANGOLA C IN C LUZ CUNHA A SOMEWHAT MORE RESTRAINED ONE. NO WORD FROM GUINEA C IN C SPINOLA. RETIRED, APOLITICAL GENERAL WILL PRESIDE.
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6. HEAVY PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN SUGGESTS CONGRESS HAS STRONG FINANCING; AND EXTENT OF RADIO AND TV COVERAGE SUGGESTS GOVERNMENT NOT HOSTILE. SOME PROVINCIAL ANP BOSSES SAID TO BE PRESSING LOCAL VETERANS TO ATTEND.

7. COMMENT: PERHAPS AS A RESULT OF GOVERNMENT

PRESSURE, CONGRESS ORGANIZERS APPEAR NOW TO HAVE
STEERED MEETING AWAY FROM ORIGINAL ANTI-GOP LINE TO
SUFFICIENT DEGREE THAT GOP STANDS TO GAIN MORE FROM
CONGRESS THAN IT WILL LOSE. CONGRESS WILL PLACATE
RIGHT-WING WHILE SURFACING IT AND LEAVING IMPRESSION
GOP ITSELF OCCUPIES CENTER OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM.
POST

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To: EUR
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